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Sharing Stories
The Kelvin Grove Urban Village History
Project
2004-2006

Executive Summary Report



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- Letter of Support
- A Visitors guide to the Kelvin Grove Artillery Barracks
- DVD with a selection of military related digital stories



Background

The Kelvin Grove Urban Village (KGUV) is a 16-hectare innovative urban renewal flagship redevelopment project that represents and articulates the results of a long term and unique collaboration between for the KGUV stakeholders, the Queensland Department of Housing and Queensland University. Their vision and philosophical approach now represents leading-edge thinking across the arenas of creative education, research, and social/environmental sustainability.

Over the last century, the land at Kelvin Grove has housed military and educational institutions that have shaped Brisbane and Queensland. These groups each have their own history. Collectively their stories represented an opportunity to build a multi-art form public history project that would construct a personal sense of place, identity, and history. This project was called the KGUV *Sharing Stories* history project and has been working collaboratively with the public for three years, including interested military history groups, to produce historically significant works with the public—actively seeking to work in partnership with the community by producing a selection of historically researched multi-art form works that included new media and text.



Objectives of Sharing Stories

The KGUV stakeholders commissioned a history project to produce significant research, community, and heritage outcomes. The KGUV *Sharing Stories* history project commenced in June 2004 and over the following thirty months captured the social history and heritage of Kelvin Grove Urban Village and its surrounding community in: an online archive (living website) that includes digital stories and artistic visual elements; and also produced a substantial historical/social book; an oral history collection; photographic and art exhibitions; and community workshops.

The broader public, diverse in ages, interests and backgrounds, were seen as an integral link to the KGUV's changing 'urbanscape', and so the history project aimed to be inclusive by working with local people, schools, and community groups to gather the memories and life-stories—creating the ongoing and developing story of the evolving community.

This multi-art form public history project offered various possibilities for telling the history of Kelvin Grove. It also seemed to increase a sense of community for individual participants, by constructing a personal sense of place, identity, awareness, and pride in the individuals involved in the formation of this history.



Research strategies and data collection

The *Sharing Stories* history project was designed and conducted in conjunction with PhD fieldwork, therefore it required academically rigorous research strategies and data collection methodology. Qualitative research comprises of methods for social investigation that carry with them vital epistemological and ontological considerations. The combination of public history, oral history, and digital storytelling (DST) techniques (such as semi-structured interviews) draws on an array of qualitative approaches and methodologies as a way to contour life experiences, to conceptualise and preserve memories, and hand down experience, tradition, and values to present now and preserve for future generations. The following sub-headings outline how the research was conducted using qualitative research methodology.



- **Organisational, archival, historical study**

Comparing and contrasting the histories of Kelvin Grove's local institutions of was critical. To conduct an effective history project, the research strategy was to gather and collate all known archived source material about the area. This included military and educational histories in particular. Initial contact with various battalions stationed at Gona Barracks (formerly Kelvin Grove Army Barracks) indicated that various battalions wanted to be involved in recording the personal stories of their groups. The *Ford Report* (Ford, 1998) initially provided an excellent synopsis from which to gain an overall analysis of the various battalions. Other major sources of information about Kelvin Grove and the surrounding area came from: the John Oxley Library's archives collection and photographic collection; from newspapers; the Fryer Library; Mitchell Library; Australian War Memorial; unpublished Honours and PhD theses; and the Bibliography of the National Native Title Tribunal 2000.



• Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling (DST) is a relatively new form of telling personally narrated stories. A digital story generally includes a combination of a personally narrated piece of writing (audio track) with photographic images and sometimes music or other sounds. These components amalgamate to produce a 2-3 minute film (See attached disc for examples of military-oriented DSTs created during the project).



• Oral history

The aim of the oral history collection was to collate the series of longer oral history interviews that explored the history of Kelvin Grove within post-war, contemporary Australian society. From this collection, excerpts were then used to introduce the historical/factual narrative throughout the manuscript to give the Kelvin Grove story a modern, human face.



- **Ethical considerations**

To collect an oral history (or any type of interview for this research project) ethical clearance needed to be approved by QUT in accordance with their required ethical clearance policy. All interviews were conducted only after ethical clearance was obtained.

Other ways of collecting stories from participants were through the KGUV *Sharing Stories* website, the KGUV Information Centre (where information forms for prospective participants were displayed) KGUV community events, QUT Alumni, and local newspapers. Ex-residents and others who may have worked in or attended the local institutions were called upon to ‘share their stories’ or their memories of Kelvin Grove. Access to details about former students, staff or military personnel of organisations was in some cases available, but it was decided by the research team that the use of such data would cross ethical boundaries we did not intend to invade. Instead, a voluntary response approach from interested parties was the practice. Rather than debilitating the project, this approach seemed to strengthen the opportunities to capture spontaneous, heartfelt personal stories in a constructive manner. In some instances, shorter, anecdotal interviews were recorded, while still using semi-structured techniques to conduct these interviews—sometimes using a combination of phone calls and email.



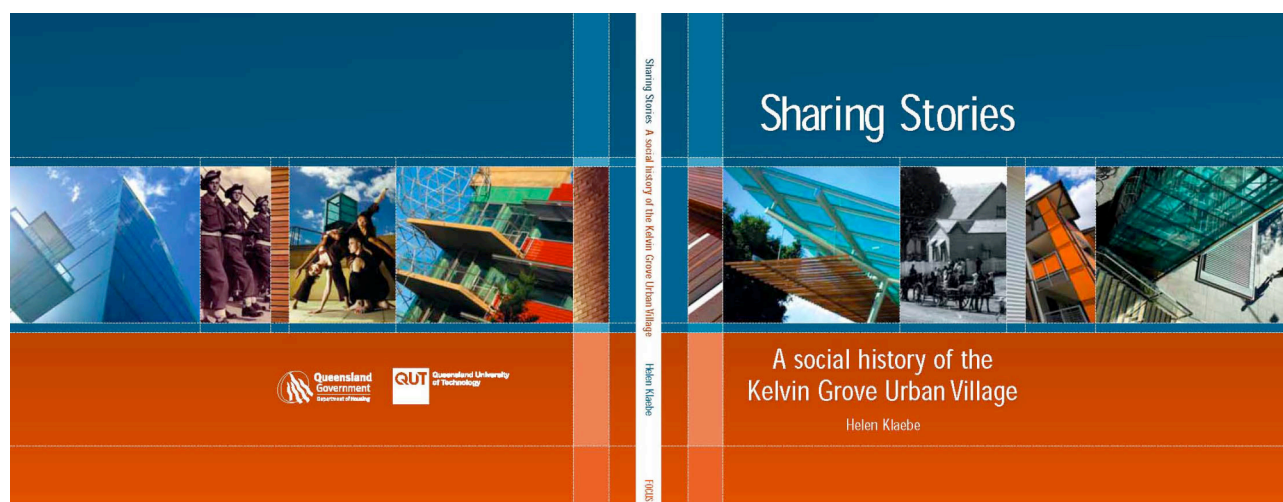
Outcomes

A Book

Sharing Stories: A social history of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village is a beautifully presented book that combines a vivid record of the Kelvin Grove area with hundreds of delightful images.

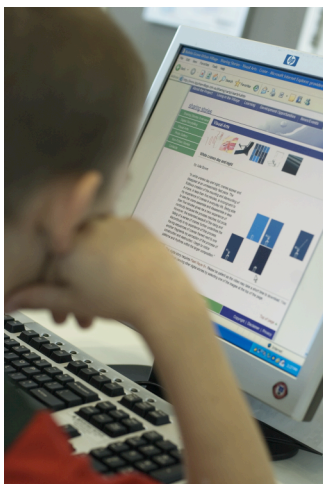
The written work comprises two very different halves—the past and the present. The past represents events leading up to the close of the military barracks in 1998 and the present embodies the KGUV from its inception until 2005. Formal educational histories of the Kelvin Grove area did exist, although none included Indigenous history, only one offered a glimpse of the social or local history (Kelvin Grove State School, 1962) and two works, including the major military study by Jack Ford, were unpublished and inaccessible to the general public (Ford, 1998; Saunders, 1999).

The challenge was to meld existing formal histories with the social history using oral history as a methodology. Where relevant personal quotes were recorded in archived material they were included in the text to give a continuity of style throughout the manuscript. The oral history interviews were a major component of the resource material. Valuing the importance of community engagement was essential to writing these personal stories, especially those of ex-servicemen, about their memories at Kelvin Grove.



Living Archive (Website)

www.kgurbanvillage.com.au/sharing



A living archive was established in early 2005 by the project to enable the community to stay informed on the progress of *Sharing Stories*. Stories, photographs, archival information, and digital stories were loaded to the site and kept current by undergraduate student involvement. The digital story telling and local artists' work are also featured here. Creative writing and journalist QUT students also researched and produced short non-fiction feature articles, such as the story of Frank Moran and the military hall named after him.

Digital Storytelling Program

This medium was used as an opportunity to narrate personal tales and combine them with a multimedia presentation to deliver a visually stimulating extension to the oral history collection. Two workshops were conducted as part of the project, one in December 2004 and the other in March 2006.

In keeping with the focus of researching and remembering as many eras associated with the institutions of the area, many of these stories are military related. Included in these are three containing memories of World War Two and six related to various periods after the war until the barracks closed in 1998.



Public art initiatives

The public art initiatives taken by the Kelvin Grove Urban Village have been very well received by the community. The parade ground for instance, lined with palms representing ‘soldiers on parade’, has proven to be very popular, as have the embedded historical text plates in the footpaths and park areas.



Historically-based park signage



Signage contributes significantly to the urban landscape at the KGUV. In addition to marking the physical location of each park, all of which are historically-inspired, the signage also presented an opportunity to provide historical content that reinforces the identity, authenticity, and cultural significance of each site.

The park names and signage content were written with the vision to acknowledge and respond to the broad array of heritage characteristics at the KGUV, interpreting its Indigenous culture, the European history, and the longstanding military connections.

• Gona Parade

Gona Parade is named after the Gona Barracks that was formerly located on the KGUV site. Gona is the name of a famous battle between Allied and Japanese troops that took place in 1942, near the village of Gona in Papua New Guinea. The name holds special significance for many ex-servicemen and women who served at the Gona (formerly Kelvin Grove) Barracks from 1912-1998. In 1998 any remaining units were relocated to Enoggera Barracks in Brisbane, so the parade signifies an important link to its past.

A sign for Gona Parade will be erected in conjunction with Stage Two of the Creative Industries Precinct.

The text for the local parks reads:

- **Parer Place**



Damien Parer (1912-1944) is a major figure in Australian creative practice. Early in his career, Parer worked with legendary Australian feature film director Charles Chauvel and leading Australian still photographer Max Dupain. All three did much to construct or reinforce prominent versions of Australian identity.

Parer is best known for his documentary achievements as an official filmmaker with the Australian Imperial Forces during the Second World War. In 1940 he gained an outstanding reputation in the western desert of the Middle East, including Tobruk. Parer moved to New Guinea where he made his most famous news report *Kokoda Front Line*. This

documentary won Australia's first Academy Award in 1942. The film gave Australians a more realistic sense of what their troops were enduring and also brought the 'human face of war' into sharper focus for military leaders. Parer's techniques influenced many others, including Chauvel.

The famous image, captured by Parer, of a tall, wounded soldier, his eyes swathed in bandages, being helped across a stream by a fellow soldier, is one of Australia's most iconic representations. It suggests a range of possibilities—from loyal comradeship and courage, to the brutality of war.

Parer also flew on a series of dangerous Beaufighter operations against Japanese shipping. His commitment to the troops and to documentary honesty eventually cost him his job in Australia; Paramount Pictures of the U.S.A. re-employed him as a front line filmmaker again in the Pacific war, covering the ferocious island-to-island fighting. In Pelelui, walking in front of advancing marines in order to get shots of their faces, he was killed by machine gun fire from a concealed pillbox.

As fellow war correspondent Chester Wilmot said in a condolence letter to his widow: "He made the camera speak as no other..."

(The Australian War Memorial was consulted and they provided the image used on this sign).

• Chauvel Place

Charles Chauvel (1887-1959) was born near Warwick in South East Queensland—his first home a slab cottage.

Chauvel championed an independent film industry for Australia and his epic films depicted pioneering and military endeavour, mateship, landscape, and romance. *Forty Thousand Horsemen* (1940) was the first Australian feature to gain international acclaim. Its theme of friendship and national pride forged in World War One was



repeated four decades later in Peter Weir's *Gallipoli*. Chauvel's *The Rats of Tobruk* (1944) was the only wartime feature to depict the Australian fighting of World War Two.

Uniquely in the film industry of the time, Chauvel worked closely in a creative partnership with his wife Elsa in the making of his films, with Elsa often the co-writer, or co-producer.

Chauvel's later classic films were *Sons of Matthew* (1949) and *Jedda* (1955). While *Sons of Matthew* praises the legend of white pioneering, *Jedda* provides a counterpoint to those values, through dramatising a young Aboriginal woman torn between two cultures. Chauvel's use of Queensland bushfire and cyclone imagery is powerfully innovative, even viewed today in an era of computer-generated effects.

"His films are unique, viewed from both an industrial and cultural perspective." Professor Stuart Cunningham, leading authority on Australian cinema.

General Sir Harry Chauvel (1865-1945) was Charles' uncle and born at Tabulam on the Clarence River where he became an expert horseman and bushman. Early in his illustrious career he was Quartermaster and Adjutant of the 1st Regiment of Queensland Imperial (Queensland Defence Force—QDF).

In 1914 Harry Chauvel commanded the 1st Light Horse Brigade and a year later landed at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli. He was commander of the most perilous position at Anzac. In the Middle East, Chauvel rose to General more swiftly than any other Australian commander. He was characterised by coolness under fire, decisiveness, tactical knowledge, a genuine care for his soldiers, and compassion for wounded enemy troops.

• Kulgan Park

Kulgun is the Turrbal Aboriginal name meaning path or road and has been named to represent the linking of parks between McCaskie and Victoria parks.



Originally, Kulgun Park made up part of the area known by early settlers as York's Hollow, after a local Aboriginal leader they called the 'Duke of York', and was considered of significance to the Turrbal people.

Until European pioneers settled Brisbane, 'York's Hollow' extended from the present day RNA Exhibition Ground and lower Victoria Park and included the Kelvin Grove Urban Village. The area was used for hunting, fishing, corroborees, organised mock battles with other nearby groups, and other ceremonial occasions.

This area remained part of Victoria Park until the 1860s when some land was leased out for grazing until 1911, at which time the land was

sold to the newly formed Commonwealth to become the Kelvin Grove Defence Reserve.

The steepness of the land made building difficult and so the area was littered with pathways, tracks, and steps that lead between the various buildings. This park has returned to being once again, a linking pathway, within the Kelvin Grove Urban Village.

• Kundu Park

Kundu is the Turrbal Aboriginal name for tallowwood, or *Eucalyptus microcorys*, a tree local to this area.

All of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village was originally covered in thick dense scrub and was used by several groups of Indigenous people. At the time of European settlement of the area, this part of Kelvin Grove was incorporated into Victoria Park.

Tallowwood is one of Australia's finest hardwoods, because of its extreme strength, durability, and ease to work with, and proved to be very popular with early settlers with an eye for timbers suitable for construction.

Tallow is a hard substance that is extracted from the fat of sheep and cattle to make soap or candles and so the greasy surface of the cut timber suggested the name 'tallowwood'. The natural oil already present in the wood made the

tallowwood an early favourite timber for dance floors and windowsills, while its strength was put to the test in heavy engineering and as railway sleepers.

Besides being a popular habitat for koalas, the tallowwood's flowers are used by honeyeaters, lorikeets, and a variety of flying foxes.

The natural heritage of the park is acknowledged through the stands of tallowwood trees, which are both a reminder of, and a return to, the original vegetation.



• Grey Gums Park

In this park there are fine examples of *Eucalyptus major*, the grey gum, which is found only in coastal areas of South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales. The hill slopes and ridges of Kelvin Grove suit this tall, straight tree. Originally the park would have been part of an open forest.

The grey gum has a distinctive smooth bark of cream, grey and light orange patches, with the bark being shed in summer. It is common to find possum marks on the trunk—in a forest habitat the grey gum supports koalas, gliders, and flower-visiting insects.



• McCaskie Park

McCaskie Park was originally part of an area the local Indigenous people called 'Barrambin', meaning windy place.

During the 1850s, European settlers and surveyors began to develop the Brisbane settlement and this area was fenced and retained as a water reserve that could be accessed by settlers. This and the adjoining area was known and surveyed as 'Three Mile Scrub'.

Gazetted as a council park in 1891, this area was known simply as 'The Oval' and was used for local recreational activities including cricket, tennis, soccer, and basketball.

In 1947 'The Oval' was leased to the Queensland Amateur Cycling Union for ten years on the condition the Union lay down a cycling track at the cost of £950.

The Oval was renamed E.E. McCaskie Oval in 1951 by the Brisbane City Council to honour Mr Edwin Ebenezer McCaskie, who was regarded as the founder of amateur cycling in Queensland, having given his services to cycling and many other sporting groups since the early 1900s. McCaskie was also involved in rowing and was known to officially start the races at North Quay, then cycle to the river bank in front of the Regatta Hotel at Toowong, and wait with his stopwatch for the rowers to cross the finish line.

After constant use for almost ten years, the track deteriorated and became dangerous to riders, so was removed. The cost of a new track could not be met by either the cycling union or the city council and the area became an unkempt piece of parkland.

The site was elevated and beautified in the early 1960s to create parkland that would provide a green haven visible to passing traffic on Kelvin Grove Road. The park was sometimes leased to circuses—the Sole Brothers and Ashton Circus used the park in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In 1996 several large Fig Trees, which lined Kelvin Grove Road, were condemned to make way for a bus lane, until local residents agitated for them to be saved. They had originally been planted in the 1882 as a barrier between the busy road and residents. The trees were moved into McCaskie Park, became heritage-listed, and now enhance the park as an inner-city oasis for the people.



***Sharing Stories* history events and exhibitions**

- **Digital Storytelling Workshop One, December 2004**

The first workshop was made up of participants of mixed ages from diverse backgrounds. Four of the eight stories produced related to memories of the Gona (or Kelvin Grove) Barracks.



- **Photographic Exhibition ‘Images from Gona Barracks, April 2005**

This exhibition was requested and displayed by other community groups throughout the year including: the Hilltop Gardens Retirement Village; Kelvin Grove State College; KGUV Information Centre; and Victoria Barracks. Some of the images can be viewed on the KGUV *Sharing Stories* website.



- **Digital Storytelling Launch, April 2005**

The collection of short films produced in the digital storytelling workshop was compiled onto a DVD and exhibited with the photographic collection. All the digital stories can be viewed on the KGUV *Sharing Stories* website.

- **Student history trail of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village with Kelvin Grove State College, August 2005**

As part of the Year 8 curriculum in urban development, students were asked to design park facilities for Mc Caskie Park, while considering historical, environmental, economic, and social issues. As a part of this task, a questionnaire worksheet was devised by the *Sharing Stories* team in relation to the historical text plaques in the footpaths and park signage for the students to complete, while listening to the history tour. Two hundred students took part and winning designs are featured on the *Sharing Stories* website.



- **Heritage Walking Tours, Community Day, November 2005**

Mr Graham Jenkinson AM, JP, who was stationed at Kelvin Grove Barracks at the end of World War Two and Helen Klæbe (historical researcher) conducted historical tours and we a lot of positive feedback from participants. Quite a number of ex-servicemen and women attended.

- **Digital Storytelling Workshop Two, March-April, 2006**

Another digital storytelling workshop was held with another group of local participants. Six of the ten stories produced were related to memories of the Gona (or Kelvin Grove) Barracks.

- **Second Digital Storytelling Launch, June 2006**

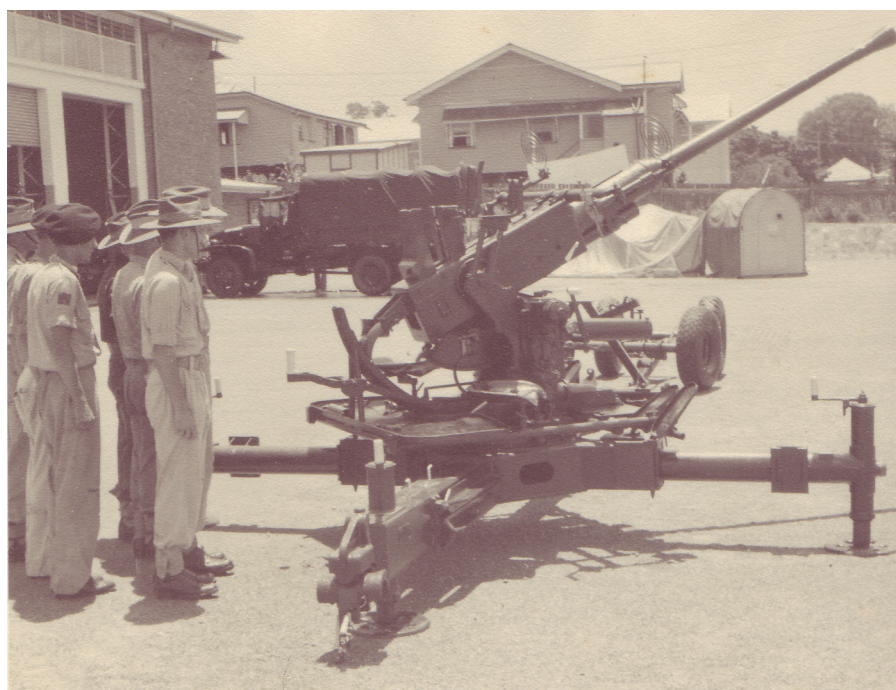
The collection of short films produced in the second digital storytelling workshop was compiled onto a DVD, with those produced in Workshop One and screened for a week at the Creative Industries Precinct. The screenings were well attended at all sessions. All the digital stories produced can be viewed on the KGUV *Sharing Stories* website.

- **Heritage Walking Tours, Community Day, October 2006???**

After the success and popularity of the 2005 walking tours, Helen Klæbe (historical researcher) conducted historical walking tours in conjunction with the Community Day Village Centre opening. Again this was well received by ex-military and the general public alike.

- **7th Artillery Regiment History Brochure, October 2006**

Ex-members of the 7th Artillery Regiment, who were stationed at Kelvin Grove in the 1950s, were recording their group history. After attending the *Sharing Stories* photographic exhibition in 2005, they were keen to prepare a brochure for the general public visiting KGUV. With the help of the *Sharing Stories* team, they produced a brochure that gives a brief synopsis of their history and provides a map depicting where their unit was situated at the Barracks in relation to the current site layout.



- **Brisbane Writers Festival, September 2006**

Sponsorship of the Brisbane Writers Festival provided workshops, masterclasses, opening address and free public seminar for over 300 secondary, tertiary, community and industry visitors to experience the reformation of the Gona Barracks into the Creative Industries Precinct. An overwhelming number of positive comments were made to the *Sharing Stories* team by ex military personnel who attended during the day.

- ***Sharing Stories* ‘Place’ public art exhibition, October 2006**

The *Sharing Stories* ‘Place’ exhibition provided an opportunity for visual arts PhD students to explore and showcase public art connections with space, environment, and history. During the course of the week, the exhibition was well attended by people of all ages.



- **‘Faces of Kelvin Grove’, the Kelvin Grove State College art exhibition (Years P-11)**

The *Sharing Stories* team worked in partnership with the school to host their annual art show at the Creative Industries Precinct. In an exercise aimed to encourage community engagement, students, and parents of a new generation could appreciate the historical significance of the Gona Parade, Parer Place, and the restored CIP buildings in conjunction with a contemporary event.



- **Book launch of *Sharing Stories: A social history of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village*, November 2006**

The book launch was held in conjunction with the KGUV Community Hub opening. More than 150 people, who had all contributed to the book attended this event and received a copy as a gift of appreciation.

Public addresses/seminars/research outcomes

As part of the *Sharing Stories* history project, other research outcomes were produced.



- **Oral History collection**

150,000-word document of transcribed interviews was produced, along with an audio CD of the recorded interviews.

- **PhD thesis**

This work comprises of the research conducted in relation to the history of the KGUV.

- **Photographic collection**

In conjunction with the community engagement opportunities, the PhD and book research, over 2,300 images were collected and collated by the *Sharing Stories* history team. These images include a significant proportion that relate to the military and educational history of the urban village.

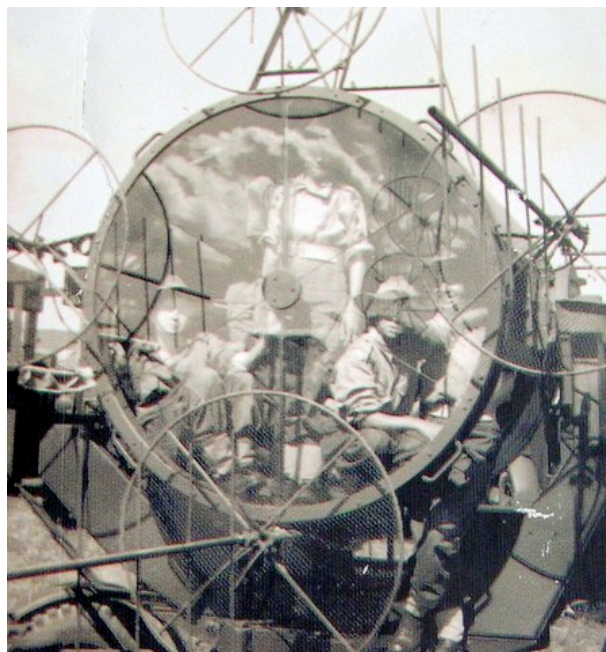
- **Public Seminar, BCC Central Library, April 2006**

As a guest of the Oral History Association of Australia's Queensland branch, Helen Klæbe spoke about the military history of the KGUV in relation to the digital storytelling workshops.

Publications

These publications have been produced in relation to the *Sharing Stories* history project.

- Burgess, J., Foth, M., & Klaebe, H. (2006). Everyday Creativity as Civic Engagement: A Cultural Citizenship View of New Media. Paper presented at the Communications Policy & Research Forum, Sydney.
- Klaebe, H. (2006). *Sharing Stories: The History of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village*. Sydney: Focus. ISBN 1921156082.
- Klaebe, H. (2006, Jul 12-16). *The Problems and Possibilities of Using New Media in Public History Projects*. Paper to be presented at XIV International Oral History Conference – Dancing with Memory. Sydney: International Oral History Association.
- Klaebe, H., & Foth, M. (2006, Oct 9-11). *Capturing Community Memory with History and New Media: The Sharing Stories Project*. Paper presented at the 3rd international Community Informatics Research Network (CIRN) Conference, Prato, Italy.
- Klaebe, H. (2006). Sharing Stories: Collaboration, Creativity, and Copyright. Speculation and Innovation: applying practice led research in the creative industries.
http://www.speculation2005.net/Spin_abstracts.HTM#Klaebe
- Klaebe, H. (2004, Jul 23-26). *Partnerships*. Paper presented at the XIII International Oral History Conference – Memory and Globalisation, Rome.
- Contributions by Klaebe to publications for the Oral History Association of Australia, such as: *From all Quarters* Journal No. 27 (2005); No. 26 (2004); No. 25 (2003); *On Tape* newsletter (March, 2006; Sept. 2005; March, 2005; Sept. 2004); and *Voiceprint* (2006).



Summary



A real sense of community within the Kelvin Grove Urban Village cannot be manufactured. Rather, it needs to grow and be nurtured by a close involvement of people who consider the Kelvin Grove Urban Village their neighbourhood.

Each generation has a particular and vivid impression of their past and even though the Kelvin Grove Urban Village is a development of the new millennium, the area itself is a richly diverse tier of histories. The KGUV *Sharing Stories* history project has produced a narrative of stories that intersect and overlap, allowing the public to experience the essence of the place and the people. Gaining an understanding of Kelvin Grove's past in this way has only enhanced the foundations from which this community will grow.

The KGUV *Sharing Stories* history project has to given voice to the Indigenous, settler, educational, military, and community histories, and provided a platform to present an understanding of how social, sustainable, and creative philosophies were combined, past and present, to create the Kelvin Grove Urban Village. Each of those histories is a comprehensive story on its own, but when they were drawn together and shared, many people (both young and old) gained a reference point to connect—promoting a collective historical unity of Kelvin Grove moving into the future.

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